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WOMEN EDUCATORS IN TEXAS, 1850-1900: WERE THEY FEMINISTS?

by Sylvia Hunt

That the experiences and opinions of women educators in Texas from 1850 to 1900 helped to pioneer new patterns emerging in the sphere of women's rights during this period is the major focus of this research.¹ The idea that the feminist movement of today had its roots in the social changes of the nineteenth century can be documented by taking a look at the women who were involved in those changes of a hundred years ago.² Women teachers provide the best source for that documentation because teaching was the first profession to be socially acceptable for women. It was the training ground for feminists.³

The first order of priority is to establish the national picture by describing the social conditions of the nineteenth century and identifying nationally recognized women teacher-feminists.⁴ Then a study of Texas teachers will place them in the context of the national picture. This study has been approached by the compilation of a list of 106 women who were teaching in Texas between 1850 and 1900, including as many facts as possible about each,⁵ and an analysis of primary sources and personal writings of eleven Texas teachers of the same period.⁶

Several social conditions of the nineteenth century aided in removing many obstacles previously hindering aspiring women. The theory that teaching was an extension of mothering became widely accepted and there was a corresponding increase in opportunities for women in higher education.⁷ Therefore, by the turn of the century, a field of public responsibility, underwritten by taxation, and a professional aspiration was not only open but virtually reserved to women.⁸

Moving from the field of theory to the world of economic reality shows that women outnumbered men,⁹ fostering the need for women to be able to support themselves as well as to take the teaching positions left open by men. Between 1840 and 1880, the number of female teachers tripled to make up eighty percent of the elementary school teaching force. In the 1880s, women routinely were trained in colleges in special post-secondary schools and classes and actively recruited for jobs in the new graded schools in cities and large towns. Between 1870 and 1900, the first women began to appear on college faculties.¹⁰ By 1886 there were 266 colleges for women, 207 coeducational institutions, and fifty-six agricultural and mechanical, medical, and scientific institutions which accepted women.¹¹ Women's right to a higher education as necessary preparation for their future profession of mother-teacher had been established. Women, did not, as had been feared, develop illness from the strains of studying, neither did they prove lacking in mental capacities.¹²

Andrew Sinclair observed that reforms do not come singly; one leads to another and reformers are linked by time and place.¹³ Women first came to be regarded as the guardians of the public morality as they reformed the ignorance and squalor of children.¹⁴ As guardians of this public morality, women also began to lead the reform movements in temperance and abolition which provided the training ground in leadership and organization for women suffrage. Women gained the franchise and qualified for office in local school elections long before they obtained the privileges of general elections;¹⁵ this fact was used to buttress the argument that women should vote because their moral perspective and domestic responsibilities allied them with those anxious to ameliorate the problems of an increasingly complex world.¹⁶

As women began to participate in public affairs as teachers and voters on school issues, their role as both civilizers and community leaders became more prominent. It could be seen that public life need not cause defeminization or change women's basic domestic instincts, and they could enter public life in other areas as well. As Willard Elsbree confirms, "Public respect for the civic contribution of women improved steadily,"¹⁷ All these factors combined to give women in the nineteenth century the opportunity to prove their capability and establish their economic value and taste of independence.

Many of the early leaders of the women's rights movement were teachers. These women became accustomed to earning their own bread by their own work. They knew personally of the injustice of receiving one dollar for every ten that a man received, thus becoming aware of discrimination against their sex. They knew first hand how badly society needed reforming when children had so little opportunity to learn. If they were reformers by temperament, then they were tempted to come out and do battle for their sex.¹⁸ The most prominent of these national teacher-reformers were Catherine Beecher, Martha Carey Thomas, Emma Hart Willard, Frances E. Willard, Maria Mitchell, and Susan B. Anthony.

William O'Neill's view that Catherine Beecher was not a feminist¹⁹ is incorrect. Her ideas were radical for the times and she was brilliant enough to realize that she could accomplish more for her cause by remaining within certain guidelines and leaving more advanced ideas for later, after initial basic victories had been won. She stated that

inasmuch as popular education was the topic which was every day rising in interest and importance, it seemed to me that to fall into this current, and organize our sex, as women, to secure the proper education of the destitute children of our land was the better form of presenting the object rather than to start it as an effort for the elevation of woman. By this method, many embarrassments would be escaped and many advantages secured.²⁰

In visualizing universities designed for women but equal in academic quality to Harvard, she founded the Hartford Female Seminary in 1823

as "the means whereby she could define a new relationship with the culture and assert social, religious and intellectual leadership."²¹ As she brought female students out of the homes of their parents into a boarding home operated as part of the school, she brought about change in socialization patterns. Women were able at her school to enjoy an intense communal experience and establish sororital ties of an intimate and rewarding character. They regarded themselves as an elite with special privileges and responsibilities.²² The boarding school concept implied the replacement of the paterfamilias by a woman as head of household.²³

Further, Catherine Beecher argued

that woman's usefulness and happiness are equal in value to man's, and consequently that she has a right to equal advantages for gaining them, that she is unjustly deprived of such equal advantages and that organization and agitation to gain them is her privilege and duty.²⁴

She urged women to capture the profession of teaching and once ensconced, to reach out and shape frontier communities:

soon her influence in the village will create a new demand for laborers and then she will summon from among her friends at home, the nurse . . . the seamstress, and the mantuamaker; and these will prove her auxiliaries in good moral influence . . .²⁵

Here is, in the nineteenth century, the first call for networking.

Beecher also asserted that women ought never to marry except for pure affection. She felt that to marry for a position or for something to do was a deplorable wrong. "But how many women for want of a high and honorable profession are led to this melancholy course. Only the teacher can discern before her the road to honorable independence and extensive usefulness."²⁶ Like Beecher herself, a teacher could travel, live in the company of other women, spend money as she chose, and still remain a true woman.²⁷

Finally, Beecher was the first to contradict the idea that women were too frail for education or working. She countered in an extraordinarily modern way that it was the idle woman who grew sick from the absence of serious work. Such women often became parlor ornaments, forced into rounds of superficial social obligations. Teaching, Beecher believed, would end this debilitating and enforced idleness.²⁸ Taken together these actions and arguments not only do a feminist make, but form the basis of the twentieth-century movement.

Martha Carey Thomas was another noted reformer-teacher who spent her time and energy trying to change a society that consigned females to inferior positions and occupations. She made it her job to foster institutions that would equip women for service in the world and that would endow them with knowledge, skills, and prestige previously reserved for men. Contrary to Catherine Beecher, she thought sexual instincts, marriage, and children interfered with women's higher achievements. As a

girl she had assessed the costs of maternity: "If a woman has children, I do not see but what she will have to, at least for sometime, give up her work: and of all things taking care of children does seem the most utterly unintellectual."²⁹

In 1883, M. Carey Thomas became dean and professor of English of Bryn Mawr. In 1894, she became president of Bryn Mawr and by the time her presidency had ended, the "college woman" had emerged as a distinct and privileged species of femininity.³⁰ Thomas predicted that eventually the college alumna would rebel against the dreariness of house work and pay for domestic services with money earned in more interesting work. Given the small size of their families, college women would not have any excuse to linger at home as mothers once their children were in school, but would seize the chance to leave their housework and use their minds again. One way or another, the potential earning power of the college-educated woman would be utilized. As a result, she would be so tempting a catch that not fifty but 100 percent of the nation's female college graduates would marry; men of moderate incomes would not be able to afford to marry any other women.³¹

Emma Hart Willard began her teaching career at the age of sixteen and later established a boarding school for girls at Middlebury, Vermont, augmenting the new socialization patterns along with Catherine Beecher. In Watertown, New York, she founded a ladies' seminary, which was moved ultimately to Troy, New York, and named the Emma Willard School. She had persuaded the governor and town council to vote a \$4,000 appropriation for the school, which became the first endowed school for women.³²

Willard's school turned out hundreds of progressive and well-educated women teachers, trained in mathematics, social studies, and other formerly "male" courses. Shocked parents protested in dismay and anger when they discovered that Willard was teaching anatomy classes in her school, introducing a whole generation of young ladies to the secrets of the central nervous system and reproductive organs of frogs.³³ In 1838, Willard relinquished Troy Seminary to her daughter-in-law and son. She was briefly superintendent of schools in Hartford, Connecticut, and then spent the rest of her years advocating women's right to intellectual equality.

Francis E. Willard is best known as the president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (1879). Dr. Willard's temperance reform overshadows other facets of her career, which are mentioned rarely in textbooks. After teaching for fourteen years, she became professor of aesthetics and dean of the Women's College, Northwestern University. "Do everything" was her motto, and Dr. Willard and her dedicated group attempted to expose the country's prison reform policies, worked for the establishment of kindergartens, and campaigned for reforms to eliminate prostitution. By 1880, the WCTU was ready to stand firm behind the national suffrage movement.³⁴ Christianity and temperance were the WCTU's

main tenets, yet no group did more to subvert the traditional role of women, or implant in its members a sort of unselfconscious radicalism that would have turned the conservative male speechless if he had taken the time and the trouble to listen to what the ladies were saying.³⁵

Maria Mitchell was a Vassar College professor. She was unrelenting in trying to advance the position of women in the field of science. She was an advocate of woman suffrage and was the president of the Association for the Advancement of Women, which she helped to found in 1873.³⁶

The inequities in teacher salaries humiliated and enraged Susan B. Anthony and constituted one of the experiences that turned her into a feminist. Born in 1820, she became a teacher during an economic crisis that increased the number of women in the labor force. She became assistant principal of a girls' school in New Rochelle, New York, earning \$30 for fifteen weeks of work. Later she took charge of a school in another New York community, earning \$2.50 a week - replacing a male teacher who performed the same duties for \$10 a week. For two years, beginning in 1843, she was principal of a coeducational academy in Canajoharie, New York.

Anthony became a member of the predominantly male New York State Teachers Association and scandalized the educators by demanding the floor at a state convention in 1852. Following the shocked silence, a resolution was passed providing that thereafter NYSTA would recognize "the rights of female teachers to share in all privileges and deliberations of this body."³⁷ At the same time a resolution was passed to equalize the grossly inadequate salaries of female educators.

From the information about these six nationally recognized teacher-reformers the following tabulations emerge:

- 2 founded women's seminaries with boarding
- 2 were presidents or deans of women's colleges
- 1 was a superintendent of schools
- 4 published material that advocated reform
- 2 were presidents of national reform organizations
- 1 was the object of discrimination
- 1 was a member of a predominantly male state organization

These tabulations show that teachers were involved in the attempt to remove sex-specific limits on women's opportunities and capacities. Their efforts were calculated, overt, and effective. As leaders, they paved the way for the twentieth-century movement.

What, then, was happening in Texas? Following the spirit of these national leaders, many Texas women were founding their own schools, agitating for reform, taking the risk of changing positions for higher pay, or simply doing the best job possible for the advancement of their students as well as for their own intellectual challenge.

The compiled list of 106 Texas teachers has provided tabulations

which parallel the tabulations on the national leaders:

- 45 founded schools
- 2 were presidents of colleges
- 1 was a dean of a college
- 18 were college teachers
- 2 were superintendents
- 12 were principals
- 23 published books or articles
- 2 received the doctor of philosophy degree
- 1 was an inventor
- 2 were leaders in the Texas suffrage movement

A reading of the information provided by this list shows that, like the national leaders, Texas teachers were self-starters, hardworking, inventive, articulate, and reformative. They were interested in improving their own education as well as that of others. Observant and caring, they assessed the problems at hand and set to work to solve them, utilizing whatever resources were available. Like teachers of today, they were busy and had little time to keep a diary or write memoirs. The myth that once married, women stopped being anything but housewives and mothers is certainly refuted in Texas: thirty-seven of the 106 were married.³⁸

From this list of Texas teachers, primary sources about two women noted as "outstanding educators" in the state and the personal writings of nine other teachers have been located. The outstanding educators were Emma Bonfoey and Willie Andrews. The nine other teachers were Laura Clark Carpenter, Melinda Rankin, Eudora Inez Moore, Cecilia Townsend, Margaret Hill Hicks, Emma Moore, Mattie Bell Anderson, Lillian Wester, and Bettie Ward Park. A study of this information provides the answer to the question: Were they feminists?

Emma Bonfoey and Willie Andrews both migrated to Texas from other states with their husbands, and founded their own schools. Both offered boarding: Bonfoey, for women, which was still a novelty; Andrews, coeducational boarding, which was almost unheard of. Both women were the victims of premature and violent deaths and neither left any memoirs.³⁹

Emma Bonfoey moved to Marshall, Texas, (from Maryland) in the 1840s. She saw a need for a school of higher education for young ladies, so she founded and became the head of the Marshall Young Ladies Seminary in 1842. She found it necessary to travel to the North to secure more teachers for her institute. In addition to her educational work, she was the wife of a district judge and the mother of four boys. The *Harrison Flag*, a local newspaper, in 1858 commended her work: "A more capable or deserving teacher never served the public . . . Her success is not a problem, but may be regarded as a certainty."⁴⁰ In 1850, she united her school with the Marshall Masonic Female Institute and became the vice-principal. The state legislature soon conferred the power to issue collegiate degrees on the institute's board of directors and by 1851 it had a hundred

students. In 1852, Bonfoey left the Masonic Female Institute and the following year opened another school for girls, offering the same basic courses.⁴¹ She continued her school during the Civil War and, at the time of her death, had been carrying on her educational work for twenty years. She had also made profitable investments in cotton.⁴²

Like Catherine Beecher, Emma Bonfoey wanted to improve education for women so she founded her own school. She was not as aware of changing socialization patterns as was Beecher, but saw the necessity of providing a place to live for young women who attended her school. The fact that she was made only the vice principal when she combined her school with the Masons' may have constituted discrimination and may have been the reason she left this school to found yet another of her own, although evidence to support these conclusions remains undiscovered. As did Beecher, she travelled and spent money on her own investments.

Willie Andrews and her husband came to Texas from Virginia in a covered wagon in 1866. Her first school was a one-room log hut on the Nixon farm in Luling. Soon the Andrews bought their own farm and constructed a large house for their boarding school with cottages nearby where boys were to live. It became known as Science Hall Institute and they ran it from 1870 to 1888. One amusing anecdote remains from Science Hall days. It seems that spring fever was in the air, and the students petitioned for a holiday on April Fool's Day. Willie Andrews ruled against it. To get even with her for such a harsh ruling, the boys decided to hold the Andrews prisoners in their rooms the next day. Girl students were also locked in their rooms, for fear some "scaredy cat" would spoil the fun. Finally Andrews relented and granted the holiday. The students had their way, but Andrews was the moral victor. She served a breakfast of hot biscuits, honey, and cool, rich milk. When the pupils tried to eat their biscuits, they discovered that Andrews had put cotton in the batter.

By 1888, the Andrew's own children were ready to enter the university so they prepared for a move to Austin. The city of Austin was so eager to have Andrews move her school there that it presented her with a lot on East Twelfth Street as a gift, asking that the school be built there. This school was known as the Austin Home Institute and attained such standing as a preparatory institution that its graduates could enter the University of Texas without entrance examinations. The Austin Home Institute closed in 1895 upon the death of Willie Andrews.⁴³

Willie Andrews was one of many selfless, hardworking teachers. Her goal was to improve education in Texas rather than concentrate her efforts on women alone. By placing males and females in the same boarding school, she provided an equal setting with equal opportunities to learn and excel for both sexes. In so doing, she exceeded the national examples set by Catherine Beecher and Emma Willard.

The nine women who left personal writings have provided a variety

of positive reasons for undertaking teaching. These reasons range from a need to support themselves to a desire to see the world. For all the difficulties they overcame, they were aware of a great opportunity to extend culture. Their communities responded with raises and appreciation for their good influence in the community.⁴⁴

The difficulties they held in common were the necessity of starting a school and recruiting students by themselves; poor and improvised equipment; cleaning and heating the school themselves; teaching all grades, ages, and subjects; disciplining large and rowdy boys; contending with petty trustees; and "boarding round." Yet their writings evidence positive outlooks, wit, humor, and attempts at historical accuracy.

Laura Clark Carpenter came to Texas in 1850 as "school marm" from Hampden, Maine. Her memoirs include two letters to her father that contain the thoughts and observations of a refined and well-educated young lady. The first letter was from Boston in 1850, where she was awaiting the arrival of the ship to Brazoria. There she would have employment as a teacher. The second letter was written after her establishment in Brazoria at the plantation of a Mr. Reese. She had a one-room school house "built expressly" for her and ten students, the nieces, nephews, sons, and daughters of Reese. She enjoyed the autonomy of deciding everything concerning the school "without questioning or fault-finding" from her employer. She spoke of free time to do as she pleased, having black servants to do everything and being "monarch" of all she surveyed. She was proud of her salary of \$250 a year plus room and board.⁴⁵

Laura Carpenter was a woman who determined the pace of her own life by getting an education, finding a job, and leaving one culture to join another in order to take that job.⁴⁶ Not a leader nor an agitator, she instead paved the way for others by living a successful example.

Melinda Rankin's life spanned most of the nineteenth century, 1811-1888. Mary Ley, in *Journey from Ignorant Ridge*, describes her as one of the great pioneers in Texas. Born in New England, she migrated West and by the 1840s reached Mississippi, where reports of the Mexican War and the religious situation prompted her resolve to go there. She could not get into Mexico at this time because she was a Protestant, so she departed for Texas alone. She taught at the Huntsville Male and Female Academy (1847-1848), opened a school for Mexicans on the border (1852), and then opened the Rio Grande Female Seminary (1854). She raised money for her schools by travelling on fund-raising trips to England. Because of her pro-Union sympathies, she was forced to surrender her school to another teacher in 1862. After the Civil War, she opened the first Protestant mission in Mexico in 1866 and a school for the children of ex-slaves in New Orleans. She was the author of three books: *Texas in 1850*, *Twenty Years Among the Mexicans*, and *A Narrative of Missionary Labor, 1875*. She advocated state textbook adoptions and the

founding of a female seminary, regularly endowed, to elevate the standard of female education.⁴⁷

Melinda Rankin was definitely a reformer. She, like several of the national leaders, published works advocating reform. As did Emma Willard, she sought endowment for her schools. As did Catherine Beecher, she travelled in pursuit of her goals.

Eudora Inez Moore saw the rise and fall of Indianola. Her "Recollections of Indianola" were published in the *Wharton Spectator* in 1934 and were later included in a volume entitled *Indianola Scrapbook*.⁴⁸ There is only one paragraph in her memoirs about teaching. Her description is of a one-room school house with only seven pupils, all boys of various ages. Although few other facts can be gleaned from this paragraph, it shows the thoughts of a kind woman with empathy and concern for others. At this time she was single and helped to support her family by teaching during troubled economic times.

The remainder of her writings tell of extreme hardships of the citizens of Indianola with cholera and yellow fever, and of ingenious methods of making life as comfortable as possible out of almost nothing. All is recorded in an uncomplaining way without a hint of self-pity. She included a matter-of-fact account of the occupation of Indianola by Yankee troops during the Civil War. Her own home was used for overnight quarters by a dozen soldiers and her family later took in and nursed back to health a captain. Eudora Moore must have been a plucky woman because when her father went outside to protest the driving off of their hogs by some black soldiers, she rushed out and told them not to touch her father as they were threatening "to beat his brains out if he moved a step farther."

In 1875, a hurricane hit Indianola and Moore's father drowned. She and her mother moved to the Pierce ranch where she taught the children. Later she and her mother moved to Ashby on Tres Palacios Creek where she built a house. Her memoirs state that she taught school in Matagorda County from 1875 through 1886. About 1906 she went to live on a ranch near Wimberly with her widowed niece. Eudora Moore acted as companion to her niece and governess to the four children. She lived out her life here, writing her memoirs and composing poetry. She died in 1933 while trying to get her memoirs published.⁴⁹

Eudora Moore worked all her life at teaching in order to support herself and her family. She is but one of the many Texas women educators who did the work at hand, whatever it was, because there was no one else to do it. As a single woman and head of a household, she, at one time, owned her own home and moved several times during the course of her life in order to find employment.

Cecilia Townsend was born in Natchitoches, Louisiana, in 1840. Her father was Austrian with a title that had been conferred by Maria Teresa.

He was well-educated and had travelled to the large cities of Europe. Her mother was German. Cecilia moved with her parents to New Orleans when she was quite small and attended school there. Her recollections describe the city as dreamy and her youth as full of music, operas, and concerts. In 1854, the family decided to move to Texas, but before they could go, Cecilia's father suddenly died. He had had plans to send Cecilia to Paris to study music and to visit their relations in Europe; but none of these plans came about after his death, and the family moved to Austin, Texas. Cecilia married in 1860. She then spoke of the slaves being freed after the war and the economic problems that this caused her family. She taught private music lessons, gave concerts, and taught one session at a school held at the First Baptist Church in order to augment the family income. After they began to prosper, she continued to teach because it kept her interested and interesting, and she did not have anything else to do. After the death of her husband, she bought and sold property in an effort to amass an inheritance for her son. Her memoirs were written when she was fifty-seven years old as a letter to her son to describe her life and the assets she would be leaving to him.⁵⁰

Cecilia Townsend provides an example of a woman who continued to teach after the need for an added income had passed. She did so for the intellectual stimulation, defying the "parlor ornament" image so common in the Victorian Era.

Margaret Hill Hicks entitled her memoirs "Memories of Ancestors." Her first teaching job was in the first radical public school in Texas at Bryan. She was another single, young woman who needed to help the low finances of her family. In 1874, she went to Rockdale, where there was no school, and recruited her own students. Her memoirs describe these efforts as well as her first year of teaching at the public school which was opened the next year. She applied for the job of principal, but it was given to a man who could "wallop the boys," as the trustees wrote. This man had a wooden leg and Margaret told of his ability to "twist his leg around and knock a boy off his feet before he could think." Under the discipline of this man, the school's atmosphere became so oppressive that the trustees hired a different principal the next year. In 1876, the new principal of the school proposed to Margaret. He was an older man and she was highly incensed at his proposal, especially since she was already in love with her future husband. She felt she must quit the public school, even though she still needed money. She decided to open another private school. Her philosophy of education was that the best way to control young people was to win their love and respect. Her private school was so successful that she later had to build a new building. Margaret's success brought her the offer of the principal's job at the public school in Rockdale.⁵¹

Margaret Hill Hicks founded her own private school and then became principal of a public school. She was obviously the object of discrimination and sexual harassment. In true feminist fashion, she just went out

and started another school of her own. She did not, however, follow Susan B. Anthony and turn reformer.

In 1880, Emma Moore of Jacksboro, Texas, joined the faculty of the Chico Masonic Academy in Chico, Texas. The school was a two-story sandstone building, with the two lower rooms used for a school and the second floor used for lodge meetings. Movable wooden partitions were installed on the ground floor so the rooms might be used together for school programs, public Masonic installations, political meetings, and other community activities. Moore taught there for two years. In 1883, the name of the school was changed to Lee College. In a letter to her father, she describes her large number of pupils and her busy schedule from morning to night. She boarded at the Manning Hotel where she was the only woman resident.⁵²

Although this is all of the information known at present about Emma Moore, she, like other young women teachers, left home to live in a strange place in order to earn her keep.

Mattie Bell Anderson was a single woman head of household and moved her children and mother to Fort Davis to take another teaching position which paid more than the one in her home town. Her memoirs state that she also was ready for a change. This independent spirit is evidenced further when she furnished the school herself, ordered her own textbooks, determined the curriculum, and spanked the son of a trustee. She was released for this last act and became the postmaster and started her own school. Her poignant revelation of keeping a boy after school reveals her concern for her students as well as for doing a good job:

Another boy occupied an undue share of my attention. Very bright but inattentive and mischievous. He seemed unequal to the mastery of Long Division. One scene is indelibly impressed on my memory in this connection. An impatient restless boy 'kept in' to learn his arithmetic, tantalized almost beyond endurance by the shouts of his school mates in their untrammelled freedom, his slate before him splattered with occasional tear drops. A teacher tired out with the day's work, sorry for Willie, anxious for his sake and hers to help him keep up with his more ambitious schoolmates. How many mistakes he made, and as often did he erase them with a dirty finger dipped in a convenient tear drop. I thought how peaceful would our lives be if all our mistakes could be obliterated by tears wrung from sorrowful hearts. But eventually he learned his lesson thoroughly.⁵³

Anderson's hard work and the success of her private school later won her the position of principal of the Marfa school. Again, here is the example of a woman supporting her family by her ingenuity and her willingness to take risks. Her excellence paid off in public recognition and a promotion.

An active teacher and a reporter, Lillian Wester reflected her life story in her book, *Memories of Mine*. Exhibiting truly feminist characteristics, she bobbed her hair in the 1880s, attended the National Teachers'

Conference in Los Angeles in 1899, and travelled abroad in 1912. As a reporter she covered the Mexican Centennial Celebration of Independence for the *Mexican Herald*. Her teaching experience was in a one-room school house, located nine miles from Taylor, where she taught everything from the ABC's to high school subjects.⁵⁴ Although not an agitator for reform, Lillian Wester was a woman who enjoyed defying convention.

Bettie Ward Park began teaching at the age of seventeen in Jewett, Texas, in order to earn money to pay for her travel there. It was an overcrowded, one-room school house, where Bettie taught all ages and all subjects. From there she went to Buckhorn School in Frio County and taught for five years at another one-teacher, one-room school. In 1898 and 1899, she taught at Hondo where she was responsible for only the first through third grades. Her memoirs relating how she handled a discipline problem show much intuition and tact for an inexperienced teenager:

Many narrow escapes I had in this first school. One instance stands out in my memory. An overgrown girl about twenty years of age was reading her first reader lesson. Suddenly she began wringing her hands, saying words too bad to hear. The children near her began laughing. The whole room began to take note. Here was my first problem in discipline! My first inclination was to laugh, too. But a teacher? No! Instead, I turned to the board and began to draw a lesson of interest to the whole group. It was surprising how quickly the group responded and quiet was restored. Later I learned the girl had been stung by a wasp. How glad I was that I had used tact and kindness in this situation.⁵⁵

Bettie Ward Park joins the ranks of other Texas teachers as one who taught in order to pay for her travel and then to support herself. There is no record that she ever advocated reform, but merely set another example of the pursuit of excellence for herself and her students.

Although Melinda Rankin is the only one of the eleven Texas teachers examined here who opened was a reformer, the rest were involved unconsciously in the attempt to remove sex-specific limits on women's opportunities and capacities. By pursuing a career and continuing the daily press for the improvement of themselves and society, they helped to free women from many of the limitations imposed by law and custom. Due to these efforts, their competence, pay status, and working conditions steadily improved. Their accomplishments effected new and more liberal views of women's abilities and place in life, giving them a chance to move about more freely, act more independently, and broaden their experience. They helped to show that the family was not impoverished by women's activities outside the home and that they could earn public recognition for excellence.

Texas teachers as a whole were not engaged in a woman's rights movement as an end in itself. However, they augmented the national picture of feminists in the nineteenth century in every aspect. They moved from teaching only their own children, to being responsible for the education

of the whole population. They were college presidents and independent business women. They published books and articles with ideas worthy of public consideration. They travelled and spent their money as they pleased or they supported their families out of necessity. These new patterns were established by women educators in Texas and the nation in the nineteenth century.

NOTES

¹Frederick Eby, *The Development of Education in Texas* (New York, 1925), provides a history of education in Texas but does not address the personal lives of teachers. Mrs. Otto Buchel, under the auspices of Delta Kappa Gamma Alpha-Phi 1934, has a hand done book of *Texas Pioneer Women Educators* (Lenz Papers in the Barker Archives, Austin). James David Carter, *Education and Masonry in Texas, 1846-1861* (Waco, 1964) has augmented the history of Texas education but provides no insight into teachers' lives. Jo Ella Powell Exley, *Texas Tears and Texas Sunshine: Voices of Frontier Women* (College Station, 1985), has published the original writings of frontier women. Mary Ley, *Journey from Ignorant Ridge* (Austin, 1976), is a history of pioneer education in Texas and provided the original writings of Melinda Rankin, Emma Moore, and Bettie Ward Park.

²Dr. Robert Smuts states that "The modern champions of women's rights advance much the same demand as feminists of the late nineteenth century: equal opportunity to develop and utilize the special qualities of women." Robert Smuts, *Women and Work in America* (New York, 1959), p. 100.

³Andrew Sinclair, *The Emancipation of the American Woman* (New York, 1965), p. 100.

⁴The working definition of feminist for this research is anyone involved in the attempt to remove sex-specific limits on women's opportunities and capacities. Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood* (New Haven, 1977), p. 5.

⁵The list was compiled from research in the archives of the Dallas Public Library, the Barker Archives of L.B.J. Library in Austin, the Texas Collection at Baylor University in Waco, the Special Collections of the University of Texas at Arlington, and the Harrison County Historical Museum of Marshall.

⁶The writings of nine of these teachers provide a rich source for Texas history, women's history, and pioneer history. These writings were found in the same archives as listed in footnote 4.

⁷Nancy Hoffman, *Woman's "True" Profession* (New York, 1981), p. 9. Julie A. Matthaci, *An Economic History of Women in America* (New York, 1982), p. 256.

⁸Redding S. Sugg, Jr., *Motherteacher, The Feminization of American Education* (Charlottesville, Virginia, 1978), p. 3.

⁹Men were moving to the frontier during this period; the Civil War also depleted the male population. Nancy Hoffman, p. 9.

¹⁰Nancy Hoffman, p. 4. Barbara J. Harris, *Beyond Her Sphere. Women and the Professions in American History* (Westport, Connecticut, 1978), p. 113.

¹¹Page Smith, *Daughters of the Promised Land - Women in American History* (Boston, 1970), p. 296.

¹²Julie A. Matthaci, p. 279.

¹³Andrew Sinclair, *The Emancipation of the American Woman* (New York, 1965), p. xii.

¹⁴Andrew Sinclair, p. 185. Sandra Myers has also stated that "Women after all were considered the cultural sensors and moral guardians of nineteenth century society, and it seemed appropriate that they might transfer some of their teaching of social cultural and religious values from the home to the school room." Sandra L. Myers, *Westerling Women and the Frontier Experience, 1800-1915* (Albuquerque, 1982), p. 185.

¹⁴Redding S. Sugg, Jr., p. 111.

¹⁵Julie Roy Jeffrey, *Frontier Women, The Trans-Mississippi West 1840-1880* (New York, 1979), p. 194.

¹⁷Willard Elsbree, *The American Teacher: Evolution of a Profession in a Democracy* (New York, 1939), p. 207. Sandra L. Myers, p. 185.

¹⁸Andrew Sinclair, p. 100.

¹⁹William O'Neill, *The Woman Movement* (New York, 1969), p. 18-19. Sklar states that "Her potential assumptions led her to oppose the women's rights movement. Nevertheless her efforts to overcome the marginal status aloted to women constituted a central theme in her career." Kathryn Kish Sklar, *Catherine Beecher* (New Haven, 1973), p. xiii.

²⁰This quote of Catherine Beecher was found in Redding S. Sugg, Jr. *Motherteacher, The Feminization of American Education* (Charlottesville, Virginia, 1978), p. 42.

²¹Redding S. Sugg, Jr., p. 47.

²²William O'Neill, p. 44.

²³Redding S. Sugg, Jr., p. 49.

²⁴This quote of Catherine Beecher was found in Redding S. Sugg, Jr., p. 50.

²⁵This quote of Catherine Beecher was found in Nancy Hoffman, p. 11.

²⁶This quote of Catherine Beecher was found in Nancy Hoffman, p. 11.

²⁷Hoffman, p. 11.

²⁸Hoffman, p. 11.

²⁹Barbara M. Cross, *The Educated Women in America* (New York, 1965), p. 31.

³⁰Barbara M. Cross, p. 36.

³¹Barbara M. Cross, p. 42.

³²Elizabeth Koontz, *The Best Kept Secret of the Past 5,000 years: Women are Ready for Leadership in Education* (Bloomington, Indiana, 1972), p. 21.

³³Elizabeth Koontz, p. 21.

³⁴Elizabeth Koontz, p. 22.

³⁵Anne Firor Scott, *Making the Invisible Women Visible* (Chicago, 1984), p. 215.

³⁶Eleanor Flexnor, *Century of Struggle, The Woman's Rights Movement in the United States* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1959), p. 114.

³⁷Elizabeth Koontz, p. 20.

³⁸Many other interesting historical facts emerge from the list. Kate Hunter was the leader of the Texas suffrage movement. Jovita Idar organized a conference in Laredo against lynching, and in support of Unions, criminal justice, and women's rights. Elizabeth E. Johnson was not only a teacher, but also the "Cattle Queen of Texas." Lyndon B. Johnson's mother was a teacher of elocution in Fredericksburg. Emily Dorothy Scarborough was known as a champion of women's rights. Her novel, *The Unfair Sex*, dealt with women's roles and discrimination against women. Belle Starr, the famous woman outlaw, taught school at Scyene, near Dallas, in 1863.

³⁹Emma Bonfoey was murdered in her bed at her home in Marshall, the victim of Reconstruction problems in the South. The complete story is told by Howard T. Dimick, "The Bonfoey Case at Marshall," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly Review*, (April 1945), pp. 469-483. Willie Andrews was thrown from her buggy when her horse was scared by a train in downtown Austin. This story is told in newspaper clippings located in the *Pioneer Schools Records, ca 1872-1962*, of the Barker Archives in Austin.

⁴⁰*Bonfoey Papers*. Archives of the Harrison County Historical Museum, Marshall, Texas.

⁴¹Randolph B. Campbell, *A Southern Community in Crisis: Harrison County, Texas, 1850-1887* (Austin, 1983), p. 110.

⁴²Howard T. Dimick, p. 471.

⁴³*Pioneer Schools Records Collection, ca 1872-1962* of the Barker Archives in Austin.

⁴⁴Julie Roy Jeffrey drew these conclusions about teachers in the trans-Mississippi West and they can be applied equally to women teachers in Texas. P. 93.

⁴⁵*Laura J. Carpenter Papers* of the Barker Archives in Austin.

⁴⁶Dr. Kathleen Underwood documents how women used the teaching profession to achieve self-sufficiency, respectability, advanced study and travel, P. 1.

⁴⁷Mary Ley, p. 55.

⁴⁸The entirety of "Recollections of Indianola" are printed in Jo Ella Powell Exley, p. 142.

⁴⁹Fifty years after Eudora Moore died, a relative opened an old trunk which he found in the attic of the ranch house in Wimberly. It was filled with diaries, letters, and keepsakes. He surmised from reading them that she had been in love with a Union soldier. Several weeks after the trunk had been opened, it was stolen, and it has never been recovered. Jo Ella Powell Exley, p. 153.

⁵⁰*George F. Townsend Papers, ca 1861-1953* of the Barker Archives in Austin.

⁵¹Margaret Hill Hicks, "Memories of Ancestors," Texas Collections of Baylor University at Waco.

⁵²Mary Ley, p. 88.

⁵³*Mattie Bell Anderson Papers* of the Barker Archives in Austin.

⁵⁴*Texas Women Educators Papers* of the Texas Collection at Baylor University in Waco.

⁵⁵Mary Ley, p. 130-133.